

## Till It Bleeds Daylight by Madame\_Ashley

**Series:** [Forms of Devotion \[2\]](#)

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**Genre:** Angst, F/M, Fluff, Music Geekiness, Sexual Content, Slow Burn

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**Summary:**

Angsty, sexy Jopper fanfic that doubles as an angsty sexy playlist.

## 1. Here Comes the Rain Again

Sensing that her composure is disintegrating, Joyce makes a quick retreat to Hopper's bedroom, aware that the last thing Eleven needs right now is the weight of a grown woman's grief upon her head. Desperately craving a cigarette – and cursing herself for forgetting her pack in the kitchen – she occupies her hands by making the bed before collapsing across it. With her face pressed into the pillow - his pillow - she inhales him, her thoughts fixated on the peace and security she felt just a short time ago, a tranquility that seems distant and impossible now.

As Joyce listens to the slow thaw of the morning's ice storm tap against the windowsill, she is at first too angry to cry. Soon the tears come, hot and silent, followed by a knock at the door. Jumping up from the bed, she wipes her face with the heels of her hands, "Just a min-" but Hopper has already let himself in, effectively closing another gap in their intimacy. He takes a step towards her, intent on offering comfort, but Joyce draws back, knowing that as much as she craves him, at the moment his touch would give her more pain than pleasure.

"Joyce, I know this is a blow, but don't worry, we can still –"

"Hop, I'm not worried! I'm not scared or sad! I'm pissed off – can you appreciate that? Do you get how fucking disappointing this is?" He lights a smoke, passes it to her, and she nods in appreciation, taking a drag before speaking. "It's just so...unfair." She hates that word, hates how ungrateful and petulant it sounds, a childish word usually accompanied by a pout or the stamp of a little foot. But she can't deny that this is exactly how she feels.

Jim sighs. "I know what you mean, Joyce. Eleven, Will, they didn't deserve any of this..."

"I'm not talking about the kids, Hopper!" she snaps, then draws a long slow breath. "I didn't mean for that to sound so awful. I'm concerned for El and Will, of course I am. It's just..." Joyce pauses to smoke and to think. Jim, initially startled by her outburst, seems to be putting a few things together. He opens his mouth to speak but

stops himself. Joyce's mind is uneasy and dazed, wholly unprepared for this conversation.

"I need to go home," she says, softly. "I'll call Jonathan to come pick me up." An uncomfortable silence descends. Joyce's eyes are on the floor, her arms hugged across her chest. When she finally meets Hopper's glance, the expression on his face is the very portrait of concern, unmarred by pity. It breaks her heart, and she feels like an asshole, but she is suddenly very tired, and she needs to get away.

Fifteen minutes later, Jonathan's Ford pulls into the driveway. Joyce is zipping up her coat under Eleven's watchful eye. "El, we're going to figure this out, okay?" she insists, hoping to hell that this is the truth. On the front porch, Hopper puts his hands on Joyce's shoulders and looks into her eyes meaningfully. Her thoughts are oscillating between "Please kiss me" and "Not in front of Jonathan," but Jim just leans in, brushing his lips against her ear, and whispers, "keep the T-shirt – it looks better on you anyway."

She smiles and blushes, her spell of melancholy broken, if only for a moment.

No sooner has Joyce gotten into the car than Jonathan is turning the radio down several notches; it is clear that he has questions or at the very least thinks his mother has something to tell him. She sighs and offers him an unconvincing smile. He gives her a sidelong glance but says nothing as he puts the car into gear and pulls onto the road. She rests her head against the cool window, the dull slap of the windshield wipers like the throb of her pulse. Annie Lennox's mournful chorus is speaking directly to her heart. Raining in my head like a tragedy. Tearing me apart like a new emotion. I want to kiss like lovers do. I want I want I want.

"Mom? Mom, why are you crying?" Jonathan parks the car on the side of the highway, and places a hand on her shoulder. "Mom, what's wrong? What happened?"

Joyce tugs a tissue from a small packet in her purse, and dabs her eyes hoping to buy herself some time before answering. When her boys ask for the truth, she rarely denies them. Today she will tell Jonathan as much as he needs to know. "Well, we were lucky -

Eleven showed up last night, and she's safe and sound at Hopper's place for the time being. Unfortunately, she's convinced that Will is still in danger, and I'm inclined to believe her. She said something about an open gate...does that make any sense to you?"

Jonathan's knuckles have gone white as they rest on the steering wheel, his face blank with shock. He swallows audibly and says, "Mom, when this rain lets up, there's something you need to see."

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It is late afternoon when they arrive in the woods. "Nancy and I came out here looking for the monster when Will and Barb were still missing, and there it was, this portal. I've been back here looking for it a bunch of times but it seemed to have disappeared. Then I found this." Jonathan gestures to a cavernous space at the base of a very old tree, cobwebbed and grimy. Joyce makes a move toward the opening, but her son puts out an arm to warn her away. "One of these gates trapped Nancy, it was just by chance that I was able to pull her out. Not knowing how any of this works, that's the worst thing."

"Well, everything has rules, right?" Joyce remarks. "We just need to figure out what the rules are."

"I've thought about that a lot, actually. I think this other world becomes more alive during our nighttime. Perhaps it even loses some power during the daylight hours. I'm not really sure how to test my theory right now, though. I want to try the gate, but Nancy says no." Jonathan looks positively sullen and Joyce wonders if more than just his theory that has been rejected by Miss Wheeler.

"Do you two come out here a lot?" she asks, treading softly.

"Sometimes. She spends a lot of time with Steve."

"Ah. So you'd kind of like Steve to try out the portal," Joyce quips, trying for humour, however dark.

Jonathan grins. "He's all right. I actually don't wish the gate on anyone. I just want to know that my little brother is going to be okay." His face has turned serious as he says this. "Mom, I know that Eleven's warning has you scared, but is something else going on?"

You've been acting weird since I picked you up this morning."

The damp air is creeping up the sleeves of her jacket, but it's Jonathan's uncanny intuition that's causing her to shiver. Since her split from Lonnie, Joyce has had little of what she would call a "private life." She's not accustomed to hiding things from her sons, particularly her eldest, who has been her confidant more times than she would like to admit. Jonathan examines her expectantly for a while, her unspoken sadness becoming his. "You have as much right to be happy as anybody else, you know," Jonathan says, looking away. "Sometimes I think that you have even more of a right, since Dad's been such a shit for so long."

Joyce has underestimated her son's maturity. "I was afraid that you would think I was just being selfish," she says. "In the middle of this mess with Eleven and Will to be thinking about...something else."

"Sometimes thinking about 'something else' is what keeps you sane in the middle of a mess like this. Trust me," Jonathan replies, with a sheepish smirk. He's blushing a little and Joyce realizes how blind she's been to her son's own secret yearnings.

"Well, this has been a wonderfully awkward conversation that we don't need to have again soon," she chuckles, putting her arm around him and giving his shoulder a squeeze. She takes a deep breath and exhales for what feels like the first time all day.

### **Notes for the Chapter:**

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## 2. Mirror in the Bathroom

### Summary for the Chapter:

A little dose of Hopper/Eleven sweetness.

It is a most unusual Saturday morning, one in which all of Hopper's typical routines and habits have been overturned in favour of a mystifying new world order. Waking up without a hangover is a revelation in itself, the absence of a throbbing headache lending an almost dreamlike aura to the day. Following Joyce's hasty departure - a strange turn of events in its own right - Jim is back in his kitchen, seated opposite Eleven. Under her unerring scrutiny, Jim feels less in the presence of a little girl and more in the company of his conscience personified. His standard "breakfast" - a can or two of Schlitz - is out of the question.

El's eyes do not leave Hopper's face as he takes his first bite. "Hmmm. These aren't too bad," he observes around a mouthful of waffle. She gives him the slightest smile as he finishes chewing. "I'm glad I put peanut butter on it, though. I don't think I could eat them plain like you. Or by the boxful like you." He gives her a wink, and although her expression has barely changed as she holds his gaze, he can tell somehow that she is pleased with him. It is surprising how Eleven's silent approval affects him, softening his tendency towards grumpiness and sarcasm.

Eleven gets up from the table, wanders into the living room and turns on the radio. She mentally steers the dial until she finds a song that appeals to her, and Hopper smiles to himself as she settles on a bouncy number by the English Beat. Despite her sheltered existence, El is developing an excellent taste in music.

She begins to mess with the two-way radio now, picking up an uninteresting exchange between Dustin and Lucas about comic books. When it becomes clear that Mike isn't joining the conversation, the two-way is shut off, but she leaves the reggae track playing on the transistor.

Enigmatic as Eleven is, Joyce's behavior also has Hopper puzzled.

Her frustration this morning was clearly with herself, but he's been unable to pinpoint the exact cause of her anger. It's possible that she's feeling conflicted about having spent the night with him, and he thinks ruefully that she is not the first woman to regret that decision.

Jim is startled out of his ruminations by Eleven's voice. "Papa?"

His breath catches momentarily, but then she repeats herself: "Hopper?" He sighs with an odd mixture of relief and unexpected disappointment at mishearing her. El is standing in the doorway of the kitchen. Her face and clothing still bear the markings of a life on the run, scuffed and dirty, and it hurts Jim's heart to see her so neglected. Already dreading the inevitable awkwardness to follow, he says, "let's get you cleaned up. What do you think?"

Eleven nods in that slow way she has. It's difficult for Hopper to tell how much she comprehends or trusts him, but she follows him to the bathroom. All the while wishing to God that Joyce were here to make this experience less uncomfortable, he sits down on the edge of the tub and starts fiddling with the taps. "So, I'll put the shower on for you, and if you want it warmer you just turn it this way..." But El is not paying him any mind. Her attention is instead focused on her own face in the mirror over the sink. She is crying quietly, her fingers stroking a scratch on her chin, rubbing at the dirt along her cheekbone.

Hopper shuts off the water, takes a deep breath, and does what he usually does when he's unsure what to say: he just starts talking. "Eleven, I'm not good at this, so I apologize in advance if I screw it up. You're upset about Mike, right?" Taking note of her enthusiastic nodding, he proceeds with caution. "You miss him."

"Miss him?" She has stopped crying.

"Yeah, like when you really wish you could be with someone but you can't." If he's not careful, he'll be the one in tears. Jim clears his throat and continues, "Contacting Mike might put him in danger, and I know that's not what you want. Perhaps I could pass on a message for you somehow. Do you know what you'd like to tell him?"

Eleven doesn't even take a moment to consider, she just throws her

arms around Hopper's waist. When he hugs her back, he senses a palpable shift within, the last bolt thrown on the door of a long-forgotten chamber.

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Over the course of a clumsy, embarrassing half hour, Jim manages to help Eleven get showered and dressed. El won't let him close the bathroom door, so he spends a long time out in the hallway with his head turned away from her, offering advice on the shower curtain, the soap, the towel. She comes out dressed in the clothes he bought her – out of town, of course – and thankfully they fit. Clueless about what young girls are wearing these days, he ultimately decided on a pair of jeans and a navy blue sweater. She seems indifferent but not unhappy with his choice.

When El heads into the kitchen and begins rummaging through the fridge, Hopper takes the free moment to have a smoke and call Joyce. He'd wanted to kiss her when they parted, but held back, sensing her discomfort with showing affection in front of Jonathan. Ironically, the circumstances made him feel like a teenager under the vigilant eye of a chaperone, and this odd, adolescent anxiety returns as he holds the receiver to his ear, preparing to dial Joyce's number.

Hopper's mind flicks to a sudden flashback of teenaged Joyce, her face flushed pink against his cream-coloured backseat. The two rear windows of the car are rolled down just enough to afford them some fresh air while maintaining the privacy of the steamed glass. Her hands are in his hair and his mouth is on her breast. He pulls back to look at her, withdraws his fingers from between her legs and places them into his mouth. Joyce's eyes widen as he slowly sucks her flavour from his fingertips. A small, naughty smile plays on her lips. "Why did you do that?"

"Because you look good enough to eat."

Mortified by the possibility of Eleven walking in on him in a state of arousal, Hopper puts these erotic thoughts aside, dials the number and waits for Joyce to pick up. She answers on the third ring, sounding concerned when she hears his voice. "Why are you calling me? Is something wrong?"



“No, Joyce, I just wanted to talk to you. You left so quickly...”

“But you never call me on the phone,” she says, suspicious.

“Well, you took all your Christmas lights down. How else was I supposed to reach you?” She chuckles at this, and Hopper can finally relax. “I hope that you don’t have any bad feelings about last night. I don’t.”

He hears a dull rattle on Joyce’s end as she drags the phone cord across the floor into another room. Her voice is hushed when she speaks. “No, not at all. What Eleven said this morning...it just made last night feel like an ending rather than a beginning, and that’s the last thing I want.”

“Okay, then let me take you to dinner.”

Joyce laughs drily. “Hopper, you’re hilarious. How’s that going to work with El and...”

“I’ll figure something out.”

Jim swears that he can hear Joyce smiling over the phone line.

### 3. Crimson & Clover

#### Notes for the Chapter:

Joyce is reading "The Claiming of Sleeping Beauty" by Anne Rice, writing as A.N. Roquelaure. It is the first book in The Sleeping Beauty Trilogy.

The diner is hot and crowded but Joyce manages to find a seat at the counter. She pulls a paperback from her purse, and catching the eye of the waitress, mouths the word "Pepsi." The start of a new book always gives her a thrill but her most recent purchase – The Claiming of Sleeping Beauty – is more exhilarating than usual. The unapologetic lust described on every page is almost too racy to be read in public, but Joyce is riveted just the same. The sensation is wonderfully wicked as she savours each dirty word, lost in this secret erotic world.

A cup of soup is set down next to Joyce's soda; everyone here knows that she never orders anything else. She looks up in time to see Nancy Wheeler at the jukebox making a selection under the amused supervision of Steve Harrington. With the push of a button, the rumbling guitar of Joan Jett starts up and Joyce can't help but smile. This song is one of Jonathan's favourites and it pleases her that perhaps her son is having more influence on Nancy than he thinks.

She lays her book aside, and is about to start eating when she hears a loud, familiar voice calling across the room. "Joyce! It's been too long! How are you?" Karen Wheeler is striding through the busy diner, tugging her youngest behind her.

Joyce greets them warmly as Karen arranges herself and Holly on two empty stools at the counter. The women exchange pleasantries about the rain, about how big Holly is getting, and wonder aloud when they last had the chance to catch up. With the surface chatter out of the way, Karen's jovial expression shifts to one of concern, and she places a well-meaning hand on her friend's arm.

"But really, how are things? I think about you guys every day, you know. I see Will quite a bit, and he seems to be doing fine, but I hope

that you and Jonathan are doing all right too.” The waitress brings Karen a cup of coffee, and puts two packets of saltines down in front of Holly. Everyone is a regular here.

It would be liberating for Joyce to tell Karen what is on her mind: to confess her anxieties about Will, to admit her fear for El’s safety, to declare her feelings for Hopper. But the truth is that her emotions are in such constant flux between apprehension and relief that she doesn’t know where to begin.

For all her worrying about Will, she has witnessed little to substantiate her intuition, and although Eleven’s circumstances are precarious, there has been no sign of Brenner or his crew since her arrival at Hopper’s place over a week ago. Jim has been a dedicated protector of his young charge, and when work calls him away from home, Joyce and Jonathan make a point of dropping by to establish that El is okay.

Joyce’s romantic life - if it can be called that - is as strange and uncertain as everything else. Her intensifying desire for Hopper exists outside the realm of any past experience, and she is unsure what she wants or expects to happen next. She can barely wrap her head around the fact that Jim is taking her out for dinner tonight, Jonathan having offered to spend the evening with Eleven. Will is sleeping over at the Wheelers’, an occurrence so common that Karen no longer bothers to ask what Joyce will be getting up to while her youngest son is away.

Karen’s brow is furrowed as she awaits her friend’s response. Reluctant to appear withholding, Joyce tailors her reply to be as reassuring as possible, being careful to avoid blatant lies. “We’re good. Jonathan’s nervous about his NYU application but he really has nothing to worry about. I’ve just been working - too much, probably - but you know how it is...”

Karen is nodding as Joyce speaks, but her eyes remain skeptical. If she suspects that anything is amiss, she’s too polite to say, instead turning her attention to Joyce’s book. “Oooh, something new!” she exclaims, noting the paperback’s scarcely cracked spine. “You always read such interesting things...” Joyce knows that “interesting” is Karen-speak for “weird,” “creepy,” or “grisly,” but she doesn’t mind.

What makes her most uncomfortable is seeing her sweet friend pick up the smutty novel and begin to read a few passages to herself.

Joyce watches with a mixture of horror and delight as Karen's widening eyes flit across the page, sometimes scrunching her nose with distaste at the raunchiness, sometimes gnawing her lip as she digests a particularly tasty bit. "Oh my God, where did you get this!" she exclaims, still reading. "I've never...this is just...wow. Can I borrow it after you're done?"

"Sure. Maybe you could even read it aloud to Ted," Joyce suggests, laughing at the sour look her friend shoots her.

"Maybe you could read it to Jim Hopper!" Karen whispers, with a wink and a gentle elbow. As her friend dissolves into giggles, heat rises to Joyce's cheeks and she has to look away, feeling like a teenager called out on a crush.

"Very funny," she grumbles, taking a bite of her cooling soup.

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The restaurant Hopper has chosen is an Italian spot in a neighbouring town. Joyce recognizes that the discreet location is mostly for her benefit, although this hasn't been articulated in so many words. Their relationship is still too undefined to weather the scrutiny of their hometown, and besides, getting out of Hawkins always feels good.

Joyce chews her lasagna at least ten times per mouthful, expecting at any moment to be caught staring at her disarmingly attractive date. After taking a sip of his wine, Hopper's glance meets hers and he runs his tongue almost imperceptibly across his lips. Joyce notices; she can't seem to stop noticing, all of her senses heightened as though charged by an electrical current. It doesn't help that Jim keeps finding reasons to touch her: his fingers trailing along the nape of her neck as he removes her coat, the slightest nudge against her calf as he shifts his long legs under the table, his thumb deliberately brushing her wrist as he reaches for another piece of bread.

To judge by the twinkle in his eye, he is taking great pleasure in teasing her. “So, Joyce. Tell me about yourself. What do you like to do for fun?” Hopper says the last word in a suggestive whisper, and it takes all of Joyce’s willpower to resist climbing across the table and kissing that smug, sexy look off of his face.

“Well, Jim,” Joyce replies in goofy game-show voice. “When I’m not donning a haz-mat suit to rescue my son from a terrifying netherworld, I love a good fondue party!”

They don’t succeed in keeping straight faces for long, and their consequent snickers attract annoyed glares from some of their fellow patrons. Joyce’s initial awkwardness subsides and the rest of the meal passes happily, the conversation easy and flirtatious. As they leave the restaurant, Hopper presses a firm, possessive hand into the small of her back, igniting a spark that crackles between her hips, before settling between her thighs.

Neither Joyce nor Hopper says much on the drive back to town, the yearning between them palpable enough. Jim pulls into the Byers’ driveway, and gets out to walk Joyce to the door. Her hands are shaking as she works the key into the lock, and presses the latch to gain entry. Once inside, Jim kicks the door shut with his heel, and draws Joyce close, removing her coat and leading her through the dark towards the couch.

Coats and shoes are discarded somewhere. They collapse onto the sofa and Joyce fumbles for the cord on a nearby floor lamp. The kisses are too many to count, his mouth on hers at first, then descending along her collarbone. Hopper pushes up her blouse and runs his tongue down her belly, undoing her pants, and pulling them off, his lips never leaving her skin.

At last he buries his face in her warm, wet core. He pauses to hoist her thighs over his shoulders, getting himself into a better position to taste the heat between her legs. Joyce is raking her hands through his hair as he devours her and when she lets go completely, her body tenses and releases all at once, her heart an exhilarated bird beating against the cage of her chest.

Hopper releases her legs and, being careful not to put his full weight

onto her small frame, eases himself down onto her body. He presses his lips to hers then opens his mouth slightly, inviting her to lick her own exquisite taste from his tongue. The kiss deepens then Hopper draws back, undresses from the waist down and guides his cock into her smoldering center. He soon establishes a rhythm that Joyce echoes with the upward thrusting of her hips. She wraps her legs around him, pulling him deeper and then he is coming, emitting a series of low moans.

Hopper withdraws, and Joyce shifts her body so the he can lie back on the couch. Stretching out on top of him, she rests her cheek against his chest. "We didn't even get to the bedroom that time," she observes, playing with the buttons on the front of his shirt.

"Next time I'd be happy to just take you across the front seat of my truck," Hopper smirks.

"Next time?"

"Yeah, or the time after that." He says it sweetly enough, but Joyce can tell that he's completely serious. This is a beginning and that thought alone sends a delicious shiver up her spine.

### **Notes for the Chapter:**

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### **Author's Note:**

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